



Pumping Serious Iron

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There's nothing quite like achieving an incredible feat of strength. For Maura Shuttleworth, manager of the Laboratory's employee relations group, weightlifting first started as support for her gymnastics pursuits, but the sport of powerlifting soon became a passion.

"I was a junior in high school," Maura recounts, "and I thought I could improve my overall strength to make better gains in gymnastics. I progressed pretty quickly and found that I had an affinity for the bench press in particular."

Strength training leads to powerlifting

Maura continued putting in time at the gym while in college in Minnesota. A trainer asked if she wanted to compete in a local bench press competition, and from that point on she was hooked on powerlifting.

In the sport of powerlifting, athletes attempt to lift maximum weight in three lifts: squat, bench press and deadlift. A competitor is given three attempts at each lift. All three lifts are then totaled, and the one who lifts the most in all three wins the competition. Competitors are grouped by weight class.

"For me, training encompasses more than just the lifting. I also like to do other things: I sometimes go to a circus school in Santa Fe—Wise Fool—where I can practice aerial disciplines, such as the trapeze, which requires overall body strength."

Maura notes that such diversified activities are designed to keep her body in the best shape possible. "The idea is to challenge my body so that it remains strong, flexible and adaptable as I age."

Shattering records

To date, Maura holds two American records, 12 New Mexico state records and nine records in her previous home base of competition in Minnesota.

"As powerlifters, we work hard at the gym, usually for nothing more than the satisfaction of pushing our personal limits," says Maura. "And even though a lot of what we do is repetitive and can become mundane, there's nothing like seeing your strength blossom over time, to the point you can lift your body weight and then go beyond even what you thought was possible. It truly is a passion."

For Maura, powerlifting is also a great way to relieve everyday stress. “Once you have the weight on your back or in your hands, there’s no way you’re thinking about work! It’s a totally different world, one where you can leave stress behind.”

Learn more about Maura in her [full Employee Spotlight](#)

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